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SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: BIG FOUR SUMMIT POSTPONED

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: UN Envoy Tiebile Drame convoked the diplomatic corps October 16 to seek their opinion on the next steps in finding a way out of Madagascar's political crisis. He explained that ousted President Ravalomanana had rejected the Geneva venue for the planned Oct 17-19 summit of Madagascar's four vying political leaders. The dip corps agreed that the meeting to put the power-sharing transition government in place was urgent, but should not be held without Ravalomanana, that Addis Ababa should be an acceptable venue for all four chiefs, and that steps would be taken to arrange a meeting in Addis as soon as possible. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) UN Envoy Tiebile Drame convoked the diplomatic corps October 16 to seek their opinion on the next steps in finding a way out of Madagascar's political crisis. He explained that, although the preparations for an Oct 17-19 summit of the four vying faction leaders in Geneva had been almost completed, including getting visas and plane tickets for the ten plus members of each of the four delegations, ousted President Ravalomanana had rejected the venue. Furthermore, former President Ratsiraka said that he was prepared to attend the meeting, but did not think it should be held without Ravalomanana. Although members of the dip corps and Drame expressed frustration with Ravalomanana, most agreed that the meeting could not go forward without him. Everyone agreed that Addis Ababa should be an acceptable venue for all four political movements.

¶3. (SBU) Drame explained that President Chissano would not be available again until October 30. As all agreed that the meeting was urgent, several options were proposed: Drame would ask Chissano if he could change his schedule to accommodate a meeting in Addis ASAP; the French would ask President Sarkozy to contact the German president to request that the meeting be approved for Berlin (according to the French DCM, Ravalomanana had agreed to Berlin in writing, but the Germans had refused due to the state of disarray of the government; additionally, Ravalomanana had made clear to ambassadors Carter and Marquardt Thursday in Johannesburg that the meeting must be held "in Africa"); and if those options failed, the mediators would arrange to hold the meeting in Addis October 30.

¶4. (SBU) Drame noted that the mediators had listened to the concerns of Ravalomanana's delegation raised at the Oct 6 International Contact Group (ICG) meeting. As delegation leader Fetison had said Oct 6 that the Ravalomanana movement would accept Rajoelina as transition president if he agreed not to run in the next election, the mediators had proposed the idea to Rajoelina. Rajoelina responded that he was not prohibited by the Maputo accords from running and that he had not yet decided if he would run anyway.

¶5. (SBU) The Senegalese, French, and Russian representatives raised concerns about the situation on the ground deteriorating if the meeting was not held soon due to divisions within the HAT, and the French DCM pushed for establishing a deadline for agreement, arguing that "one movement shouldn't have veto power." The IMF rep noted that the state council had put on hold the decree appointing consensus Prime Minister Mangalaza until a ruling was made on the complaint filed by HAT PM Monja Roindefo regarding his removal - thus the government still has a lame duck prime minister. While others agreed that the meeting was urgent, it was decided that the venue change should be made to accommodate Ravalomanana, whose attendance was essential for any chance of a true resolution. The Charge noted that the international community would lose credibility

if we decided to move forward without the participation of the democratically-elected president. The Germans strongly agreed, and stated their concerns that the international community be careful of its role to avoid being accused of interfering and imposing political solutions on the Malagasy.

16. (SBU) Comment: The reason for the failure of this Summit attempt may not really lie in the choice of venue, but in Ravalomanana's pique with the mediation team after the October 6 ICG, which confirmed TGV as president of the transition. Furthermore, he may hope time in on his side, and against Rajoelina, perhaps also seeing a further deterioration on the ground likely as more time passes, particularly now that Rajoelina is weakened by divisions within his own movement. It remains to be seen if Ravalomanana will create another pretext for avoiding a meeting in Addis (or elsewhere). If he does, the patience of the international community vis-à-vis the former president will likely have been exhausted, as well as that of his own movement, many of whom seemed ready to go to the Summit in Geneva without him -- and would probably do so if he balks again. Of course, the larger question is, even if the four are brought together, will they be able to agree on the final division of transition seats? End comment.

MARQUARDT